

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-10

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, AR

SUBJECT: EGAN KIDNAPPING - PRESS GUIDANCE

1. THERE FOLLOWS A STATEMENT AND PRESS GUIDANCE PREPARED FOR THE FEBRUARY 28 NOON PRESS BRIEFING. THE STATEMENT WAS MADE BY THE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN. THE TRANSCRIPT OF THE ACTUAL QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSIONS FOLLOWS BY SEPTEL.

2. STATEMENT. WE ARE GRAVELY CONCERNED OVER THE ABDUCTION OF CONSULAR AGENT JOHN EGAN BY TERRORISTS CLAIMING TO BELONG TO THE MONTONEROS ORGANIZATION. OUR AMBASSADOR IN BUENOS AIRES REMAINS IN CONSTANT CONTACT WITH THE ARGENTINE AUTHORITIES, WHO ARE MAKING A MAJOR EFFORT TO EFFECT MR. EGAN'S SAFE RETURN. END STATEMENT.

Q. WHAT ARE WE DOING WITH REGARD TO THE TERRORIST DEMAND
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THAT THE GOA PRODUCE FOUR MEMBERS OF THEIR ORGANIZATION

TO PROVE THEY ARE ALIVE AND WELL AS THEIR CONDITION FOR THE
RELEASE OF CONSULAR AGENT EGAN?

SR.(SUGGESTED REPLY) AMBASSADOR HILL IS IN CLOSE CONTACT
WITH ARGENTINE AUTHORITIES. HE IS DISCUSSING WITH THEM ALL
ASPECTS OF THIS CASE.

Q. CAN YOU GIVE US ANY DETAILS?

SR. OUR PRIMARY CONCERN IS THE WELLBEING AND RELEASE OF
MR. EGAN. WE WILL NOT SAY ANYTHING HERE WHICH MIGHT PRE-
JUDICE HIS SITUATION. FOR THIS REASON I WILL NOT DISCUSS
OUR CONTACTS WITH THE GOA OTHER THAN TO SAY THAT THEY HAVE
BEEN FREQUENT AND AT A HIGH LEVEL.

Q. TO THIS POINT HAS THE GOA BEEN COOPERATIVE?

SR. WE HAVE BEEN ASSURED THAT THE GOA CONSIDERS THIS A
MOST SERIOUS MATTER AND WE ARE DISCUSSING WITH THE GOA ALL
POSSIBLE STEPS TO OBTAIN EGAN'S RELEASE.

Q. ARE THESE TERRORISTS LIKELY TO KILL EGAN IF THEIR FOUR
ASSOCIATES ARE NOT PRODUCED?

SR. I CANNOT ANSWER THAT. WE ARE DOING EVERYTHING WE CAN
TO AVOID THAT.

Q. IS IT TRUE THAT THERE WERE NO GUARDS PROVIDED BY THE
GOA FOR MR. EGAN'S OFFICE?

SR. WE HAVE ASKED THE EMBASSY FOR A FULL REPORT ON THE
CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING MR. EGAN'S ABDUCTION.

Q. WHAT ARE THE DEMANDS OF THE KIDNAPPERS AND HAVE THEY
BEEN IN COMMUNICATION WITH THE U.S. GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS?

SR. THE KIDNAPPERS HAVE MADE KNOWN THEIR DEMANDS TO THE
ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT. THEY DEMAND THAT THE GOA DEMON-
STRATE THAT FOUR INDIVIDUALS WHO THEY CLAIM ARE HELD BY
THE GOA ARE SAFE AND SOUND. THE KIDNAPPERS HAVE NOT BEEN
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IN COMMUNICATION WITH U.S. OFFICIALS.

Q. I UNDERSTAND WE CLOSED OUR OFFICES IN PROVINCIAL
ARGENTINE CITIES AFTER THE KIDNAPPING OF ALFRED LAUN IN
CORDOBA LAST APRIL. WHAT WAS EGAN DOING STILL IN CORDOBA?

SR. WE WITHDREW ALL AMERICAN EMPLOYEES WHO HAD BEEN SENT
TO POSTS IN PROVINCIAL CITIES IN ARGENTINA. MR. EGAN,

HOWEVER, WAS A PERMANENT RESIDENT OF CORDOBA, WHERE HE HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN EMPLOYED BY A PRIVATE U.S. FIRM, CHOSE TO REMAIN THERE AND TO CONTINUE AS U.S. CONSULAR AGENT.

Q. IS THERE ANY DANGER TO OTHER U.S. OFFICIALS IN ARGENTINA?

SR. SEVERAL TERRORIST GROUPS IN ARGENTINA HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO CARRY OUT KIDNAPPINGS AND ASSASSINATIONS. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, WE ARE DOING OUR BEST TO PROTECT

THOSE U.S. OFFICIALS IN ARGENTINA.

Q. ARE YOU INSTITUTING SPECIAL OR ADDITIONAL MEASURES TO DEFEND U.S. OFFICIALS?

SR. WE DO NOT DISCUSS PROTECTIVE MEASURES.

3. EXCEPT FOR STATEMENT, ABOVE GUIDANCE NOT USED AT NOON PRESS BRIEFING. KISSINGER

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